

# COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS



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# Columbia Library Columns

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# Corvo's Death in Venice

MIRIAM J. BENKOVITZ

FREDERICK Rolfe, self-styled Baron Corvo, first went to Venice in early August 1908. A former schoolmaster, a failed priest, failed photographer and inventor, failed artist, but a writer of considerable ability, Rolfe had spent much of the two preceding years as guest of Harry Pirie-Gordon and his parents, the Edward Pirie-Gordons, at their home Gwernvale near Crickhowell, in Wales. There Rolfe met Richard Dawkins, eleven years younger, Director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, a distinguished scholar, and a man of means. Dawkins suggested the trip and offered to pay for it. Rolfe spoke of repaying Dawkins at some later time with money he said he could earn from descriptive writing and artistic photographs. After some light-hearted planning, the two men set forth by train for Venice.

Rolfe left behind him in England debts to a former landlady, Mrs. Griffiths; a lost lawsuit and the shame which, in his eyes, it entailed; as well as uneasy relations with his solicitors Barnard & Taylor and expectations of more money from them than they were willing or had any cause to provide. He left as well an acute awareness of his "penniless condition" and resentment bordering on enmity towards the priest Robert Hugh Benson.

When Dawkins and Rolfe arrived in Venice, with Rolfe carrying his possessions in a large laundry hamper, they settled into the Hotel Belle Vue et de Russie, a modest hotel on the Piazzetta del Leoncini, an extension of the Piazza San Marco. Almost at once they hired a small boat, a *sandola pupparin*, and two boys to row it. Soon Rolfe was helping the boys, and the group ventured farther and farther onto the lagoon.

*Opposite:* Rolfe's final residence was on the Grand Canal in Venice; at the far left in this 1913 photograph is the Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi where Wagner died, to the right of which is Rolfe's Palazzo Marcello.

But Dawkins and Rolfe did not get on. Rolfe expected his host to relish “loafing elaborately” and to relish paying for it, but Dawkins was a modest, prudent man with simple tastes. Within a month the two quarreled, and Dawkins, leaving £30 with Rolfe to enable him to complete his holiday and return to England, went to Rome. The two men never met again, nor did Rolfe go back to England. Instead, he commenced the rest of his life, some five years of struggle to live at anyone’s and everyone’s expense.

Within a month, the £30 Dawkins had given Rolfe was gone and his debts were mounting daily. He appealed first to Dawkins and finally managed to extract another £15 from him. Meanwhile, before October ended, Rolfe had got £25 from Barnard & Taylor in keeping with an agreement they had with him about life insurance. That same month he received £12.10 from Harry Pirie-Gordon, sent so that Rolfe could return to England. There, he said, he meant to finish his book *Hubert’s Arthur* and work with the priest Robert Hugh Benson on one about Thomas à Beckett. Then, having acquired cash, Corvo said he could return to Venice and open a photography business. But of course he never left Venice. By mid-November he had spent every thing sent him, he owed more than £30, and he was busy maintaining his status with his landlord Evaristo Barbieri at the Hotel Belle Vue.

Corvo’s writing contributed most to his credibility. In summer and early autumn, he took his papers and notes with him aboard the *sandolo* and there seated in a cane arm chair, put his huge Waterman fountain pen to use. When the weather worsened, Rolfe worked after dinner, that is, from about eight in the evening to one in the morning, in the *salone* of the hotel. He was composing a diatribe against the cheap journalism of Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, and preparing a fair copy of *Hubert’s Arthur*.

While he labored on these two projects, Rolfe attracted the notice of Canon and Mrs. Lonsdale Ragg, also English residents at the Hotel Belle Vue. In a letter to Pirie-Gordon, Rolfe lumped the Raggs with “a pack of English” who, he said, were running



after him. To avoid such pursuit from both the Raggs and Lady Layard, whom Rolfe designated as the Queen of England in Venice, he warned them of his financial "disabilities" and urged them to "drop" him.

Once again Rolfe appealed to Barnard & Taylor for a loan or an allowance. But he had failed to send back corrected proofs of *Don Renato* as he had agreed to do, and the solicitors held the rights to that book owing to a pre-Venetian transaction. Now they denied his request.

At almost the same time, Rolfe turned down help from Benson and Pirie-Gordon. They offered £15 for travel expenses and asked Barnard & Taylor to arrange for the British consul to send Rolfe home. He objected to transactions through the Consulate, however, and urged Pirie-Gordon to leave everything in the hands of Barnard & Taylor. Even though his position was deteriorating rapidly, Rolfe meant to appear solvent to Barbieri and to the English in Venice. Rolfe even asked Dawkins to expose none of his lies.

By mid-December, however, Barbieri had grown suspicious, and he could no longer ignore the hotel bills Rolfe had simply destroyed because he could not pay them. Barbieri consulted Ragg, who tried to reassure the hotel keeper with talk of Rolfe's books and then agreed to pay for Rolfe's meals over the Christmas season. Since the room Rolfe occupied was without heat and generally undesirable, Barbieri decided to take no action, but he told Rolfe what had happened.

Almost at once, Rolfe gave Ragg an impassioned account of the sufferings Dawkins and Benson had caused him. Thereafter relations between the Raggs and Rolfe expanded. They often had their after-dinner coffee together, and Rolfe helped Ragg correct and revise his book *The Church of the Apostles*. When he and Mrs. Ragg urged Rolfe to accept invitations from the British, however, Rolfe held back. He offered his services to the English Hospital, Lady Layard's special charity, and he boasted to Pirie-

Gordon of the convalescents' regard for him. But in answer to invitations from numerous people, Lady Layard, the Taplins, the Frederick Edens, and others, Rolfe insisted that he be left alone.

Eventually, of course, Rolfe gave in. He went with Ragg to one of Horatio Brown's Monday nights at Ca'Torresella. Rolfe pretended disdain for the whole evening: for Ragg's rendition of the lament for Aïda, for the other guests, and for the host with a "bluish smack-of-cheek-red face . . . a pursed mouth, a tight waistcoat splayed over a pudding . . . and longish knock-kneed shanks." Still, Rolfe continued his friendship with the Raggs and his activities for the deprived, especially the survivors of a massive earthquake which devastated Calabria and Sicily on December 28, 1908.

At the same time he finished the two volumes of *Hubert's Arthur* and sent them off to Pirie-Gordon, urging him to accept the book in friendship. After all, Rolfe said, he had done nothing worse than fling "his drawers over the windmills."

*Hubert's Arthur* along with *The Weird of the Wanderer* constituted a lavish gift. Rolfe instructed Pirie-Gordon to market both books on his own and to pay Rolfe whatever seemed fair. The fact that he owed Barnard & Taylor whatever he might get from the books for money already spent, bothered him not at all. Apparently neither did the fact that he also owed Barbieri close to £100.

Rolfe could have evaded the entire situation by going back to England as the guest of either Benson or the Pirie-Gordons, but he could not leave Venice. Harry Pirie-Gordon had begun to recognize that fact. He sent Rolfe's winter clothing to him and through Barnard & Taylor arranged for a reasonable monthly payment to Barbieri so that Rolfe could stay at the Belle Vue. Barbieri was pleased enough with the situation to tell Rolfe about it.

Rolfe acted at once. He was determined that money spent in his behalf go through his hands. Insisting that Barbieri did not understand English adequately enough to know what Pirie-Gor-



don planned, Rolfe destroyed the entire arrangement. Even so, Barbieri let him stay on at the hotel for a time, but on April 14, 1909, he forced Rolfe to leave. Thereafter, until his death in late October 1913, despite occasional but fleeting periods of comfort, even luxury, Frederick Rolfe's life was one of disaster and pain.

Rolfe walked throughout many nights to avoid wintry cold or the attack, when he slept on a boat, of either hungry crabs or rats. He was little better off on the bare bed springs in the flat which had once been that of the Raggs's. As his discomfort and hopelessness grew, so did his mistrust of Benson and Pirie-Gordon. He accused them, with Barnard & Taylor, of trickery aimed at their own benefit and his financial loss from his books.

From time to time, Rolfe acquired small sums of money which he almost invariably misspent. One most blatantly wasted was a sum which came from Lord Roseberry, whom Rolfe had encountered when he went looking for food at Horatio Brown's. Roseberry's gift served to ally Rolfe for a short time with a slovenly, drunken artist named George Demain Cooke, but that relationship ended after Rolfe's money was used up and he had plastered Cooke's face with a double-handful of rice and had broken a plate over his head.

Another time of comfort commenced at the end of July 1909 when he went to live at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Ernest van Someren. Corvo had met these two through the Raggs ("Ragg and Raggage," he had come to call them), and he expressed admiration for the doctor's courage in dealing with Lady Layard. A month later, Rolfe exposed his situation to Van Someren, who promptly acted out of sheer kindness by offering Rolfe a room, his meals, and £10 a week in return for a few menial, household tasks. So Rolfe moved into a small room on the first-floor landing of the doctor's home, the Palazzo Mocenigo-Corner. Except for his few chores, Rolfe was a guest in the household. He had his meals with the Van Somerens and often sat after dinner with Mrs. Van Som-

There is such a lot of it said in this book, that  
one must get at the heart of explanations as to  
how it all happened without undue delay. It is  
not my fault that things occurred in the order in  
which they did occur. I am not the regulator of  
this universe. If he chooses to design a conse-  
cutive series of events or energies or  
for the bringing together of a man or a maid,  
demarcus to his said design ought to be addressed  
to him: not to me. I am merely the recorder.  
Personally I am not so sure that the object of  
his design was to bring this particular man to  
this singular man. He does things <sup>rather</sup> as a  
general rule: ~~that~~ I should imagine that he could  
have done this business without manning two  
hundred thousand people for the purpose. So I  
do not propose to inquire into reasons which  
neither I nor anyone else can possibly understand.  
I shall not attempt to explain coincidences, or  
to say why these things happened as they did.  
On the contrary I shall simply write down the  
bare facts concerning <sup>my friend</sup> Nicholas <sup>Gifford</sup> as they  
were told by them to me. If the said facts  
seem unusually categorical, that (of course)  
is my fault, as a bad story-teller; or I don't  
refuse to bear the blame of it. All I say is  
that these amazing things were so. I find  
them amusing. Perhaps there are some other  
fools who will find them amusing too.

Rolfe's Venetian letter book, kept during 1909-1910, contains a draft  
of the first chapter of *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*.

eren while she played the piano. But as might be expected, the household tasks soon became a burden to Rolfe, and his room, not heated for the winter, became a source of discomfort.

Meanwhile, Baron Corvo was a busy man. He continued to ac-



Gaelle Covelli painting Rolfe's portrait in Venice, 1913.

cuse Barnard & Taylor of contributing to his literary impotence and Benson and Pirie-Gordon of trying to rob him of his career. At the same time, with his clothes piled on his blankets to help keep him warm, Rolfe was writing a novel. It was *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, and he worked at it almost without pause so that he came to resent his household chores as interruptions and to blame the doctor for anything which slowed the writing.

Corvo wrote one version of the first chapter of *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* on the rectos of the last pages of his Venetian letter book, a manuscript from the Martyr Worthy Collection now in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, not published until 1934, was complete in some form by early March 1910. But Corvo rewrote it more than

once; four versions are at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The fact that *The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole* existed in part in its author's Venetian letter book is singularly appropriate, for the matter of the novel is in the contents of the letter book.

The novel tells of the adventures and misadventures of Nicholas Crabbe, by whom is meant Rolfe, during a stay in Venice. Crabbe, a magnificent boatman who rows his *topo* in the Venetian manner, is a worthy hero who can suffer hardship and deprivation with enormous stoicism. He is a man of principle who is the innocent victim of people he has left behind in England and of new acquaintances made in Venice. His aim is simply to survive despite endless financial problems which haunt him night and day, and he is convinced that he has the property with which to do so, a number of books already written but unpublished. To publish these books will open the way to his enemies, given fictitious names in the book. These include both English and Venetians who were once his friends but are now feared as traitors. Crabbe's problems are mitigated by Zilda, his young gondolier working in the guise of the boy Zildo, who eventually assuages all with love, the desire and pursuit of the whole. Ultimately, Nicholas Crabbe's problems are solved by his wisdom and the nobility of his character.

The letter book tells a different story. Except for the exclusion of the character Zildo and the use of real names rather than fictitious ones, the letter book generally recounts the same events. The difference between the novel and the letter book is in the character of Nicholas Crabbe, who appears in the letter book as Baron Corvo at his most Corvine, unvarnished and unbearable.

The novel was often the subject of conversation when Ivy Van Someren and Rolfe had their after-dinner coffee while the doctor made his rounds. More than once she asked to read it, but Rolfe insisted that she await publication. Then suddenly in early March 1910, he offered Mrs. Van Someren the manuscript to read on condition that she tell her husband nothing about it.

Mrs. Van Someren read with much pleasure until she began to

recognize both people and places in the book, almost all a part of "modern Venice." She identified the Albergo Bellavista as the Belle Vue and the Universal Infirmary at once. Similarly, characters came alive for her despite their altered names. Most apparent was Rolfe as Nicholas Crabbe, but there was no problem with



Rolfe as gondolier on his boat, photographed by  
Thomas Wade-Brown in 1913.

other identifications: Lady Layard as Lady Pash, the Raggs as the Wardens, Harry Pirie-Gordon as Harricus Peary-Butlaws, and Robert Hugh Benson as Bobugo Bonsen.

Ivy Van Someren withdrew her promise to Rolfe and told her husband what she had read. He, in turn, confronted Rolfe that same night with a first lien on the book torn to shreds and stated that "Christ had recently been forbidding him not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." Rolfe left the next morning,



March 5, 1910, without breakfast, declaring that he could not stay at the Palazzo Mocenigo as an object of charity.

That Rolfe survived the next ten days was a miracle. To stay alive at night, he had to keep moving. In fact he had no place to sleep day or night, and his food was scant and uncertain. At last, on March 15, 1910, he returned to the Hotel Belle Vue. Barbieri allowed him to live in the Clock Tower which was being converted as an annex to the hotel. In less than a week, Rolfe had recovered his papers left with Van Someren and settled down to his preoccupations. A major one was sharp enmity for Dr. Van Someren. Another was the hypocrisy of which he accused the "egregious Ragg and Raggage." And Barnard & Taylor were a "lacerating sore" in Rolfe's breast. On March 19, he quoted Caliban of *The Tempest* to Pirie-Gordon: "Remember to possess his books, for without them he's a sot as I am."

But Rolfe's existence on a penny loaf each day and only an occasional meal took its toll. By April 22 he was seriously ill, and on the next day he was delivered to the English Hospital where he was given the last sacrament. But he recovered, and when Rolfe was discharged from the hospital on May 11, the consul reinstalled him at the Hotel Belle Vue. From there Rolfe immediately informed Dawkins, Ragg, and Pirie-Gordon of his recent illness and blamed each one for it. Whoever was to blame, and it was certainly none of those three, Rolfe's situation was precarious and his position at the Belle Vue with Barbieri was steadily deteriorating.

Then, for once, Rolfe had unexpected help from an unexpected source. The Reverend Justus Stephen Serjeant, en route from Rome to his rectory in Huntingdonshire, spent August at the Belle Vue and during that time developed real confidence in Rolfe and his affairs. Serjeant even saw him as a good financial risk. The two men agreed to become partners, a decision based largely on an inheritance which Serjeant expected momentarily. As soon as he received it, Serjeant was to negotiate with Barnard & Taylor and



in due time finance Rolfe, who could then devote himself to his books, those already written and those yet to come.

The wait was grueling, and Rolfe underwent what he described as an "unspeakably awful time" after Serjeant left Venice. It reached a climax on January 27, 1911, when Barbieri evicted Rolfe once more. At first he walked his way through the cold nights. Then by some unexplained means, Rolfe secured use of a *topo* and survived by living on the boat with a large tarpaulin as protection against rats, crabs and winter storms.

By April 2, 1912, however, he received his first remittance from Serjeant and established himself in a small square room at the top of the stairs on the first floor of the Albergo Cavaletto. It is a pleasant, well-run, small hotel which started operations centuries ago. Rolfe began to take care with his appearance, dressing himself in a dark blue, double-breasted suit similar to that of a naval officer and a peaked cap over his hair, now kept a youthful, auburn color. His clothes and his boats, a gondola and two more elaborate vessels, were the glories of his new affluence. He set to work at once on proofs of *The Weird of the Wanderer* as well as on other literary projects, including a new novel "Amico di Sandro" and a number of short pieces. He kept his manuscripts moving from publisher to publisher, always with the hope of acceptance and large sales.

As usual, Rolfe's financial situation began to decline. From early April to early December, Rolfe had about £1000 from Serjeant, and the legacy from which the remittances had come was almost exhausted. Apart from a few short pieces and *The Weird of the Wanderer*, Rolfe had managed to get nothing published, and his financial return was meager. Furthermore, his account at the Cavaletto was long overdue and Antonio Arban, the innkeeper, could see nothing ahead but eviction. Owing to his liking for Rolfe, Arban arranged for a flat which Rolfe's shrinking resources might handle; so in late March, Rolfe left the hotel for a top-floor flat in the Palazzo Marcello.

By May, Rolfe could pay no more. He had sold nothing, and he had no prospects. He was living on meals which Arban provided and on credit. Most of Rolfe's time was spent on the water, but he lacked enthusiasm even for that. He was older, exhausted by failure, and weakened by illness. Arban, aware of Rolfe's despondency, convinced him that sharing his flat with another poverty-stricken Englishman named Thomas Pennefather Wade-Brown might prove serviceable, and Wade-Brown moved in.

As they often did, these two dined together at the Cavaletto on the evening of October 25, 1913, and returned to their flat. After a brief chat, each went to his bedroom. The next day Wade-Brown found Rolfe lying fully dressed on his bed where he had fallen with a final heart seizure. Let it be hoped that Rolfe had come at last to the fulfillment of the desire and pursuit of the whole, that is, that he had found love.

# Masefield, Ricketts, and *The Coming of Christ*

CARL WOODRING

IT is generally known that T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* of 1935 was neither the first nor the last modern liturgical play to be performed in Canterbury. Dorothy Sayers followed Eliot in the Canterbury Festival of 1937 with *The Zeal of Thy House*, produced by Harcourt Williams with Laurence Irving as designer. It is less well known that the only play actually performed in the Cathedral was the first, John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ*, in 1928. Subsequent plays, including Eliot's, were banished to the Chapter House.

The chief instigator of the Canterbury pageant at Whitsuntide in 1928 was the Dean, the Rev. George K. A. Bell. When he asked Masefield in July 1927 to write the play it may have been in the nick of time; in October Masefield wrote to Florence Lamont that theologians were "suddenly aghast" over his religious drama of 1925, *The Trial of Jesus*, now found "rotten with Arianism, toucht with the worst kind of Pelagianism, a bit Socinian, and just reeking with Monophysitism."

Among the holdings of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library regarding *The Coming of Christ* are production notes by Masefield, a tableau-photograph of the cast, a rare Christmas card derived from Laurence Irving's painting from memory of the final tableau, three printed announcements from the Precentor, similar materials from a later production at Wittersham, and items from Charles Ricketts, stage designer for the work. Ricketts had created the sets and costumes for Masefield's *Philip the King* at Covent Garden (to raise money for war charities) in 1914.

Masefield's Nativity drama differs from the usual Christmas pageant in its combination of medieval mystery or miracle play,

based on the Biblical narrative, and allegorical morality, a form of drama common in the fifteenth century. The prelude music closed with the entrance of two Trumpeters of the Host of Heaven, followed by the angels Power, Sword, Mercy, Light, and Anima Christi. Masfield named his three shepherds—worldlings—Rocky, Earthy, and Sandy.

Gustav Holst was asked to compose incidental music. It was Laurence Irving, O.B.E., artist and author, grandson and biographer of Henry Irving, who suggested to Dean Bell that Ricketts be asked to design the costumes and whatever sets or screens found necessary. Irving, who lived nearby in Wittersham, was to be involved in each subsequent Canterbury Festival—an involvement including the choice of Eliot in 1935. He had illustrated a limited edition, signed by author and artist, of Masfield's *Philip the King* published the previous year, 1927. (The collection includes a copy given by Corliss Lamont.)

Ricketts wrote from London to one of his avid disciples, Count Antonio Cippico: "Years ago the idea would have thrilled me to the very toe-nails; to-day—such is the effect of years—I do not feel very enthusiastic. It probably means a great deal of work, for nothing—by that I do not mean money, but the curious 'lack-lustre' of the English mind and its lack of appreciation." Along with others involved, Ricketts underestimated the attention the event would receive from *The Times* and the press generally. To another admirer, Cecil French, he wrote on March 23: "I have crowns, jewels, and the Holy Child to make with my own hands; this is my third distinguished infant in the last two years, which is a good record for a bachelor." To still another disciple, Cecil Lewis, he deepened the jest on the day of the first performance, May 28: "I made the Holy Child without the assistance of a Virgin—Winston calls it Ricketts' Immaculate Conception. . . . My activities have included some hundred ermine tails and a huge shepherd's hat made out of a fish-basket." He had attended at least one rehearsal, for he reported, "Some of the persons look

splendid, others like Mrs Grundy." He concluded: "I have bought a Rubens for Canada."

Masefield and Ricketts corresponded mostly about the costumes but also about the use of the cathedral as setting. Ricketts, who



Charles Ricketts in his studio, ca. 1926.

had designed for the Abbey Theater of Yeats and Lady Gregory, for Shaw (most notably *Saint Joan*), for Granville-Barker, for the D'Oyly Carte Company (*The Mikado*, *The Gondoliers*), and for the Casson-Thorndike company, procured from his usual sources in London the needed properties, armor, wigs, beards, and fabrics even for lesser members of the cast who were required for economy to sew their own costumes. As the date of the first performance approached, he corresponded on such matters directly with



Dr. Bell's wife, "Mrs. Dean," who had assumed most of the chores of production. Having misunderstood the scope of Masefield's estimate of costs, Ricketts "scrapped expensive wings" for the angels. "I think he exaggerates the number of persons required . . . & the cathedral steps will not hold too many." He worried lest it take so many men to carry the litter of the Virgin that his beautiful dress for her not be visible to the audience. Irving, not incidentally, played Gaspar, the best-dressed of the three kings. Masefield developed the character more fully in "The Song of Gaspar," of which there is an autograph in the Lamont-Masefield collection. As Ricketts and Charles Shannon had a second residence in the keep of Chillham Castle, about five miles from Canterbury, costumes and properties could be driven over in one of the chauffeured cars of Sir Edmund Davis, owner of the castle and patron of Ricketts, Shannon, and other artists.

It is not clear whether any of the designer's and the playwright's visits to Canterbury (Masefield's from Boar's Hill, Oxford) coincided. Because of his responsibilities as adviser on purchases of art in Canada, Ricketts was in Ottawa and New York in October and November, 1927, during the earliest preparations, and later absent from the chief rehearsal because of a meeting in London: "... the Holford Sale was unforeseen, & my share in the Canterbury Mystery is only that of the dresser or man concerned that the persons should look right." Before and after this mock-modesty, he quarreled with what he regarded as excessive movement required by the playwright's instructions and asked that his warning be read to Masefield.

On May 13, 1928, Masefield wrote to Florence Lamont: "I am off betimes tomorrow to rehearse the play at Canterbury. . . . As usual, when it comes to a rehearsal, I wish it were some other play, but there will be a certain rest in having abundant actors, who will all know their lines, and who will be sackt and miraculously replaced if they cut rehearsals. This will probably halve the woes of rehearsal at the very least. To think of being able to sack an actor



instead of having to woo him all the time & comfort him with flagons: golly."

Working in an era before the institution of directors—absolute, authoritarian, and, when granted possession of classical plays and



Tableau arranged by Ricketts of the 1928 production of  
*The Coming of Christ* at Canterbury.

operas, often self-indulgent—Ricketts and Masefield each had become accustomed to intervening between playwrights and actors. Lillah McCarthy, acting under Harley Granville-Barker, and living with him, was glad to have Ricketts tell her when to raise a sleeve or fan that he had designed for her. For at least ten years Masefield had been in charge of his own theater and his own company of amateurs, the Boar's Hill Players. Shaw, like Ricketts and Masefield accustomed to ordering actors about, warned Sybil Thorndike that Ricketts's elaborate costumes and sets for *Saint Joan* were part of Ricketts's effort to override actress and playwright. It was inevitable that Ricketts and Masefield would have a conflict of authority over the details of staging.

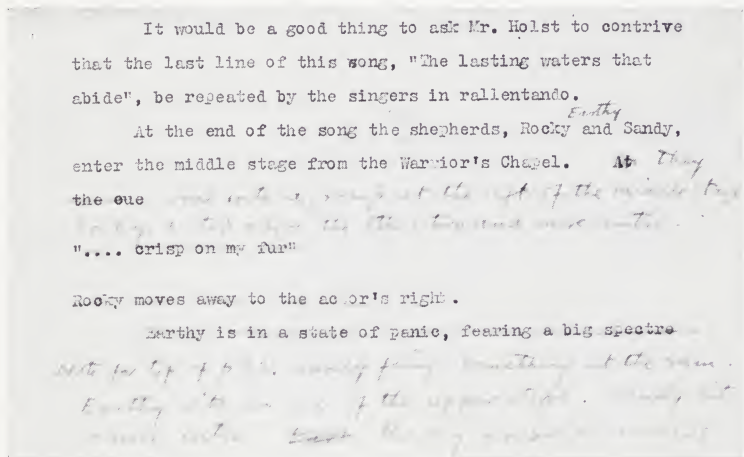
George Bell dated May 8 his invitation to "Actors, Singers, and

other Helpers” to tell the Precentor how many tickets they desired for friends. He expected the greatest demand to be for Whit Monday afternoon. Members of the public who responded to announcements in the newspapers were asked to read the play before the production in editions published by William Heinemann Ltd.—three shillings sixpence, ordinary edition; one shilling text obtainable only in Canterbury—because “the acoustics of the Cathedral present special difficulties.” Despite the generosity of the principals and much voluntary help, cost was a difficulty that could be alleviated, the Dean explained, by contributions from all who attended. A second printed announcement, on blue paper to signify disappointment, notified enquirers that “every available ticket for each of the four performances of the Mystery Play had been disposed of.” Demand led to an additional, fifth performance.

The great centerpiece of the Columbia collection is a typescript of eighteen pages, given by Corliss Lamont in 1969, containing Masefield’s notes on the production, with corrections in Masefield’s hand. The play as published by Heinemann contains brief stage directions, referring to transepts and a designated number of steps from nave to choir, but easily adaptable for performance in almost any church. Masefield’s notes, keyed to the page numbers of the published editions, instruct the actors and others in various ways: “The three Kings need not give any impression of being companions. Their speeches, no less than their costumes, suggest that they are mainly interested in themselves and in their quest, not in each other.” He recommends that the property-master attach chains to the butts of spears, “so that the clashing of the butts might ring aloud.” As the three kings complete their song in unison (page 28), “It would be a good thing to ask Mr. Holst to contrive that the last line of this song, ‘The lasting waters that abide’, be repeated by the singers in *rallentando*.”

Internal evidence shows that Masefield corrected these detailed instructions after the five performances, with the expectation that the play would be repeated in Canterbury on later occasions: “Af-

ter the Power has entered the Quire the Trumpeter and the Gate-Closers enter. This year, as the Trumpeter was somewhat short-sighted, he entered from the Warriors' Chapel between the two Gate-Closers. It would have a look of greater symmetry if he were



A page of Masefield's manuscript notes for the 1928 production of *The Coming of Christ*.

to enter from the centre of the nave. . . ." (The projected two trumpeters have become one.) Masefield decided to shorten future performances from their average in 1928 of "one hour, twenty-five and a half minutes" to one hour and fifteen minutes. He wondered if each audience thereafter should not be limited to seven hundred. In the event, the production was far too successful, brought too large an audience with too little piety and too much debris, for the Archbishop of Canterbury who forbade any further performances in the nave of the cathedral.

As Corliss Lamont records in *Remembering John Masefield*, verses by Masefield in tribute to Dr. Lamont's parents were later engraved on a tablet in the Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral, in honor of their aid in restoration after the bombings of World War II.

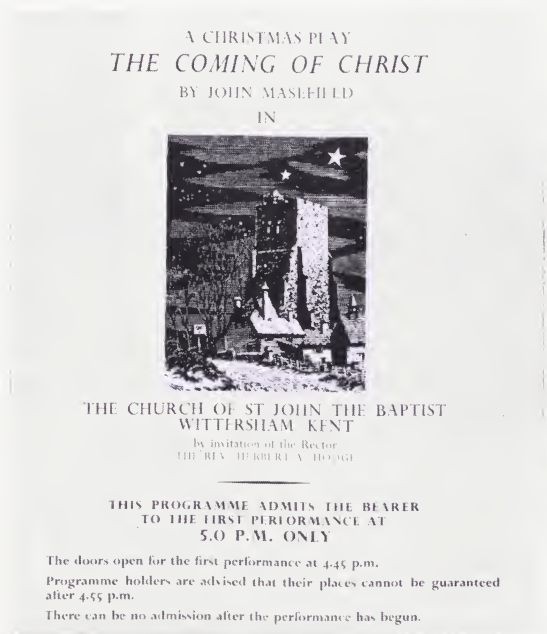
Masefield inscribed a copy of the limited edition of *The Coming of Christ* to Ricketts, with an accompanying note: "If you would not mind, I should be glad if you would accept from me this copy of the play which you made so lovely to look at." The book and the letter are both in the Columbia collection.

In 1929, when Dean Bell became Bishop of Chichester, he took with him the costumes for *The Coming of Christ*. On three days in December, 1931, the play was given a full production in the chapel of Lancing College, Chichester, under the direction of E. Martin Browne, not only the producer of *Murder in the Cathedral* but the director also of Eliot's subsequent plays.

In 1953, a Coronation year, it was proposed that Masefield's Nativity play be repeated at Canterbury. When that proposal was rejected by the then Dean, performances were arranged by Irving at the Church of St. John the Baptist at Wittersham, with the musician Alan Jefferson as director for rehearsals of the actors resident in London. Attendance was at the invitation of the Rector, the Rev. Herbert A. Hodge. Dr. Bell lent the costumes for Wittersham and attended as guest of honor the first performance, at 5 p.m. on December 12th. Jefferson succeeded Irving as director of the production. Irving designed new screens. Christopher Hassall preceded the performances with "an offering of verse." The cast was to have included E. Martin Browne, Peter Finch, Robert Speaight, and Harcourt Williams, but of these busy stars only Williams (First Shepherd) and Speaight (whose wonderful speaking of verse can still be heard in various recordings) were able in fact to appear, the more readily because they were "locals" who lived nearby. Irving once more took the role of Gaspar. Choral support came from the Wittersham Male Voice Choir and the Tenterden Choral Society.

Alan Jefferson described the occasion in a letter to *Theatre Notebook* in 1967: "At the start of the play four angels (one of whom was played by John Schlesinger) debate at some length. They stood between the choir stalls in the little church, in Rick-

etts's costumes of blazing gold, with their pointed ornamentation filling the air with light and something almost holy. There was no possibility of an audience's relaxation—both houses on this December evening sat completely spellbound at Masefield's verse,



Cover of the program for the 1953 performance.

at Gustav Holst's music, and especially at Charles Ricketts's costumes." (Jefferson's draft of the letter, it was not published, is in the Columbia collection.) Masefield, Poet Laureate from 1930, sent a letter that was reproduced in the program in facsimile: "In thanking all these unseen Helpers, let me say to them what Sir Francis Drake said to the men of his Fleet:—'God send such another Company, when there be need.' All happy fortune to you all. John Masefield."

The collection includes also, as gifts from Alan Jefferson to the present author in 1972, a plan of the acting site drawn by Irving,



mimeographed "Final Arrangements" for the performers, and Jefferson's copy of the personalized circular letter expressing the appreciation of Irving and the Rector for "magnificent team work." "Actually," wrote Jefferson, the Rector "was so unhelpful as to be almost opposed to it." Bishop Bell, by then weighted with international honors, preached a sermon at Wittersham on December 13, 1953, the Sunday after the performance: "A wonderful deed has just been done in Wittersham Church. A poetic play . . . an act of worship in which poet, producer, composer, players, singers, trumpeter, organist, accompanist, stage directors, wardrobe mistress, electrician, secretaries, ushers, audience and Rector have all played their part."



# Letters from Lynn Fontanne

ERIK BARNOUW

CORRESPONDENCE with Lynn Fontanne in my papers in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library piqued the interest of its director, and he asked me to write some words for *Columns* about the correspondence and what had occasioned it. I am glad to do this; it stirs many memories and involves a curious chapter in literary history.

About the time I joined the Columbia faculty soon after World War II, I also began intermittent work for the Theatre Guild, adapting plays, sometimes novels, for its one-hour broadcasts sponsored by U. S. Steel. The series had started on radio in September 1945, became a television series a few years later, and lasted until 1962. Various writers did the adapting; each assignment involved a separate call from the Theatre Guild and a separate contract. The adapter was expected to attend rehearsals and make script adjustments as needed.

The playing time of a *Theatre Guild on the Air* script was at first limited to 54 minutes, later to shorter periods as commercials grew longer. The adapter was inevitably faced with severe cutting problems. Other drastic changes might be made if the transfer from one medium to another seemed to demand it. There was often tension between those on the production staff who wanted the closest possible adherence to the original, and those who wanted to take advantage of the fluid possibilities of the broadcast media.

I did radio adaptations for three appearances by Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. The second of these set off memorable events. It involved the Arnold Bennett play *The Great Adventure*, which was based on his novel *Buried Alive*. When I was called for the assignment, it was emphasized to me that Lynn

Fontanne had a special interest in this venture. As a young girl in England, just starting her career, she had seen *The Great Adventure* in a celebrated performance starring the music-hall idol Miss Wish Wynne, who must have been extraordinary. Arnold Bennett, in his journal, called her a "genius." The event made an indelible impression on the young Fontanne, and she had long planned to do the play herself, some day. Now was to be the time. Lunt would be the shy, world-renowned painter Carve, an excellent role for him. The Theatre Guild wanted me to know the importance of the occasion; I would have several months to work on the script.

On reading the play, my first reaction was consternation: it seemed creaky and static. On reading the novel *Buried Alive*, I felt better. It had action missing from the play and, moreover, an entirely different ending. In both versions of the story the great painter (called Farrl in the novel) is thought to be buried amid suitable pageantry in Westminster Abbey; actually his valet, who happened to have a heart attack in his master's bedroom, is interred in the Abbey while the painter himself, fleeing the dreaded hubbub, is sheltered by a warm-hearted widow in Putney, who begins to cure him of his shyness. The artist now lives in blissful obscurity. Eventually, enterprising reporters get wind of what has happened; in the play the scandal is successfully quashed to avoid embarrassment to the British Empire, but in the novel it is not and leads on to a far more amusing climax. I asked the Theatre Guild if I could use material from the novel. The first answer was no; it would involve a different copyright owner and new, probably difficult negotiations. However, I happened to notice in the copy of *Buried Alive* that I drew from the Columbia library that it carried no copyright notice. The novel had apparently been published in the United States without copyright and was in the public domain so far as the United States was concerned. Theatre Guild counsel looked into this and finally gave me a go-ahead to use both play and novel.

What evolved was an adaptation that used passages from the

play but a structure more like that of the novel, a loose structure suitable to radio. I even used a characteristic radio device seldom used on the stage, first-person narration passages for both Lunt and Fontanne, so that parts of the story would be experienced from his point of view, others from hers. I realized it would be a new departure for the Lunts.

Some weeks after I delivered the script to the Theatre Guild, an urgent call came from Homer Fickett, director of the *Theatre Guild on the Air* broadcasts. He came straight to the point: "I think we're in trouble." The Lunts, just back from Genesee Depot, their Wisconsin retreat, had read the script. Lynn Fontanne wanted to discuss it with us. We were to go for a breakfast meeting the following Sunday at the Lunts' East Side apartment.

Homer Fickett was accustomed to crises and approached the Sunday meeting with bonhomie. Breakfast was served on a low table in front of a fireplace, with a fire going. Homer and I sat on a couch facing the Lunts, who occupied a similar couch. We had orange juice, poached eggs, English muffins, jam, and coffee. Homer quickly got the Lunts reminiscing, and this became what seemed to me a dazzling performance, not unlike the Lunts' stage performances. They constantly interrupted each other, teased each other, talked through each other's speeches (as they did on the stage) but always allowing the other's key lines to come through clearly. They constantly supplemented (and amended) each other's accounts in a way that evolved both rivalry and partnership, and always wit and warmth. It was unforgettable.

As I watched, hardly saying a word, I kept wondering about the script. After more than an hour of performance, it seemed we should either talk business or leave. So I asked Lynn Fontanne if there was something she wanted to say about the script. She shook her head and smiled reminiscently. She mentioned having reread the original play. After a while she said: "I was wrong: I thought I remembered a play. I didn't at all. I remembered a performance." She then said my script would do very well.

On that note we departed. The Lunts seemed, to our astonish-

ment, to be accepting the script as written. And that is how it went into rehearsal. With the Lunts approving, no one at the Theatre Guild dared tamper with it. During the following week I had the amazing experience of seeing it take shape in the Lunt-



Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in *O, Mistress Mine*  
at the Empire Theatre, New York, 1946.

Fontanne manner. On the first day, when lesser members of the cast tended to give their all, to show what they could do, the Lunts held back, seeming to *think* their way through the scenes rather than to act. A U. S. Steel representative always came on the first day to sit in the sponsor's booth and listen to a run-through, and was inevitably annoyed at this, and had to be reassured that the

Lunts would indeed be magnificent when the time came. The reassuring was done by one of the Theatre Guild partners, Lawrence Langner, Armina Marshall, or Teresa Helburn, one of whom was always on hand for this high-level liaison, along with representatives of the Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn advertising agency. At later rehearsals, without the gallery of observers, it would be clear that the Lunts were working things out in minute detail at home. Especially in the Lunt-Fontanne scenes, a marvelously intricate interlacing of their performances evolved day by day. When the broadcast came, it seemed to me the most brilliant radio acting I had ever heard. The Lunts themselves decided to repeat the program a year later—live. At this time, the major networks never broadcast from recordings.

Meanwhile, the Lunts were appearing on Broadway in *O Mistress Mine* (which I would later adapt for radio, after the Broadway run). One day, much to my surprise I received a letter with EMPIRE THEATER on the back. That is where *O Mistress Mine* was playing. The impeccably typed letter, signed by Lynn Fontanne (did she have the services of a secretary in her dressing room?) read:

Empire Theatre  
New York City  
May 5, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

We have often received a letter from Mrs. Bennett over the years asking if we wouldn't care to revive "The Great Adventure" and it has always seemed to us as it did when we came to do the radio script, that it was a little anemic for the kind of thing that is expected now in the theatre. But since your wonderful revision of the script and your knowledge of exactly what to do with it, I have been thinking ever since that if you would consent to try and write a whole new play, ignoring Bennett's dramatization and tak-



ing your play directly from the book, you could do a magnificent job of it for present consumption.

If this would interest you *and we get the consent of Mrs. Bennett*, then you can see Mr. John C. Wilson and have a talk with him about what financial arrangements you would like to make. If you do agree to it, I would be very much obliged if you will keep the proposition a secret, as I am doing this off my own bat without mentioning it to my husband, the idea being to delightfully surprise him. So don't even mention it to the Guild or anybody. It will be between us and John C. Wilson.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

To a young university instructor, the arrival of such a letter from a reigning queen of the theater was indeed an event. While overwhelming, it stirred also a confusing mixture of thoughts. What was the meaning of the secrecy request? Was Alfred Lunt likely, or not likely, to share her enthusiasm for the idea? More serious was my own doubt that the idea was feasible, at least for me. For over a decade I had lived and breathed radio. I had begun to dabble with television, and the advent of the tape recorder had made me deeply interested in the possibility of the documentary. The theater was no longer on my mind; I was headed elsewhere. And I was sure that what I had contributed to the broadcast had a lot to do with my knowledge of radio, and that very little of it was applicable to the theater. In fact, I had not the slightest notion of how to approach the project. Still, I was sure that to anyone in the broadcasting or theater worlds it would seem insane if I did anything other than what I proceeded to do. I wrote to Miss Lynn Fontanne, c/o Empire Theater, expressing my delight and saying I looked forward to hearing from Mr. John C. Wilson. A reply came promptly.



130 East 75th Street  
New York 21  
May 16, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw,

I was so delighted that you are interested.

Mr. Wilson is, at the moment, in London but we are expecting him back any day and as soon as he comes I will tell him of your willingness to try a script.

Meanwhile I am sending you a copy of a letter I have had from Mrs. Bennett, which I cannot make head or tail of. Perhaps you can but I do hope that when deciphered it is not discouraging.

We are off to the country on June 1st and shall stay there all summer long, but you will hear from Mr. Wilson soon after he lands.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

The enclosed letter from Dorothy Bennett was long. The first thing I noticed about it was the surprising address from which it came: 606 West 116th Street, New York 27, across the street from my office in General Studies. I had recently taken a graduate course in modern English literature with Prof. William Y. Tyn-dall, who had devoted a lecture to Arnold Bennett and had made references to Dorothy Bennett. But he too, I learned, was unaware that Dorothy Bennett was living at the edge of the Columbia campus. Her letter began:

606 West 116th Street  
New York, 27  
May 11th '47

Dear Miss Fontanne,

Thank you so much for your very nice letter. As to what you say of "The Great Adventure," in the first place I am most interested to learn that you and Mr. Lunt have always thought the play would suit you. I could not agree more fully. You would be merely perfect, and would re-create the characters in fullest richness and the story with its vital truth—given the right script.

To me it seems an inescapable fact that the play needs considerable revision in various places, and a new treatment of act iv, to be drawn more closely from the book, "Buried Alive." I know the author regarded act iv as less than satisfactory, but as the best solution, at the time, to a practical problem which, due to modern techniques and equipment, is now no longer so crucial.

But respecting the idea of making an entirely new script: would not this have the very serious disadvantage of losing many of the facets of the characters as revealed in the existing dialogue, and also much of their "basic essence"; and of blurring, or changing, the play's intellectual theme and argument? . . .

There was more urging of this sort. She fervently hoped the Lunts would consider doing the original play, with needed revisions, and drop the idea of commissioning a new work. Finally she raised the serious technical obstacles to Lynn Fontanne's plan:

Now I must explain that, although I own the play (which by the way was written by Mr. Bennett alone) by a deed of gift, the book ("Buried Alive") belongs to the

Bennett Estate. Due to the fact that another legatee has a life interest in it, the Estate is managed at present by the Public Trustee, London. Therefore, authorization for a new dramatization of the book would have to be given by him; although he, no doubt, would have first to consult me, as owner of the existing dramatization. . . .

Dorothy Bennett, though referred to by Lynn Fontanne as Mrs. Bennett, was not Bennett's wife. She was the actress long known as Dorothy Cheston, who had legally changed her name to Dorothy Bennett so that she and Arnold Bennett could travel together without embarrassment. The arrangement had been established in punctilious fashion, as described in Margaret Drabble's fine biography of Bennett. Bennett's interest in Dorothy had begun years after his legal separation from his wife. After discreet teas and dinners with the actress, he had explained to her his agonizing dilemma. His wife had adamantly refused a divorce, and there seemed no legal way to dissolve the marriage. But Bennett declared to Dorothy his love and devotion. He could not offer her a ritually sanctioned marriage, but if she could accept a less formal relationship, he would do all he could to make her happy. She had thought it over for a time, then agreed. They had honeymooned in Paris, and lived there much of the time. Among their literary friends the arrangement was readily accepted, and meanwhile the couple led a very domestic life. One of Bennett's chief worries concerned Dorothy's future. In the legal separation from his wife, it was stipulated that the income from all his literary properties would go to her after his death. Bennett, interpreting this as applying only to his books, decided to deed to Dorothy the very successful play *The Great Adventure*. This was contested in court by the wife, who became increasingly vindictive after Bennett settled down with Dorothy, but the arrangement survived the legal challenge, and the play became Dorothy's property. Understandably it remained a crucial value to her, and not only

for financial reasons. She herself had appeared in a 1923 revival of the play. To press the Lunts, she soon followed her first letter with another. It began:

May 26, 1947

Dear Miss Fontanne:

An offer has come up from a manager who wants to do "The Great Adventure" for a week at the Greenwich summer theatre, but who is asking for an option on a N. Y. production of the play. He wanted my answer at once, but I replied that I cannot let him know before the beginning of the week as to the N. Y. option. . . .

Dorothy Bennett therefore asked the Lunts for a firm commitment of some sort. Could she be assured they would do the play, with whatever revisions might be needed, "in about 2 years time"? If so, she would "refuse to grant any options elsewhere." A copy of this came to me with another Lynn Fontanne letter from the Empire Theater:

May 27, 1947

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

I have tonight received another letter from Mrs. Bennett, a copy of which I enclose.

So I think perhaps we had better let it go, as she seems on the tiresome side, don't you think? I have written her, telling her it is impossible for us to make a decision at the moment and advising her to take the offer from the manager of the Greenwich summer theatre, including the New York option.

I am so terribly sorry. And I am very grateful to you for your kindness and willingness to work on it.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

This seemed, at the moment, to end matters to my simultaneous relief and disappointment. However, Dorothy Bennett quickly wrote again, reversing direction. "As long as you have started things rolling," she wrote Lynn Fontanne on May 28, "I beg you to go on, or rather to let them stay rolling. I shall not grant any option elsewhere for a New York production." This brought me another Empire Theater letter.

Dear Mr. Barnouw:

It looks a little bit now as if Mrs. Bennett was being a bit too business-like and trying to hurry us. I am enclosing her letter.

Please do whatever you think about it. I will be with you either way.

I am sorry to be so shilly-shallying, but I was impatient with Mrs. Bennett for trying to pin me down.

My address after Saturday of this week will be Genesee Depot, Wisconsin.

Yours sincerely,  
Lynn Fontanne

P.S. John C. Wilson will write you—and you can talk it over with him.

Instead of John C. Wilson, manager of the Lunts, I heard from the Theatre Guild. Its attorney, H. William Fitelson, was taking charge; the matter had become a Theatre Guild venture. His first problem was to clear the rights. He wrote me to say: "That is going to be a problem because it not only concerns the Estate and Mrs. Bennett, but also Twentieth Century-Fox." I had a series of meetings with Fitelson. It was the first time I had breathed of the matter to any one but my wife.

The problem was that a film titled *Holy Matrimony*, starring Monte Woolley and based on *Buried Alive* and *The Great Adven-*



ture, had been made by Twentieth Century-Fox, and that its lien on the screen rights still had years to run. Clearing this problem was essential. One of the rewards of a Broadway success, for its producer, writer, and sometimes others, was a share in the large sum that might come from the sale of screen rights to a Hollywood studio. A Broadway production was not likely to materialize without this possibility. And the relevant rights must be available internationally. *Buried Alive*, in spite of its dubious copyright status in the United States, was still fully covered in Europe and elsewhere; screen rights to *Buried Alive* must be included in the package. The difficulties seemed immense but Fitelson was prepared to explore them with Twentieth Century-Fox.

It was many months before I heard more, and had another meeting with Fitelson. Amazingly, he had obtained an agreement, but with many provisos. Twentieth Century-Fox had accepted the idea of "merging" the screen rights in my unwritten play with the screen rights in the script written for *Holy Matrimony* and owned by the studio. This meant that the author's share of a film sale would go partly to me, partly to Twentieth Century-Fox. Since the total author's share might be substantial, this did not seem too serious. But there were other conditions. The deal would be void unless, before a stipulated deadline about two years away, the play was approved by the Lunts and accepted for a Broadway run in a Theatre Guild production starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.

Fitelson helped me review the risks. If I had trouble getting the necessary acceptances before the tight time limit, my efforts would have been wasted. If either of the Lunts fell ill, my efforts would also have been wasted. If the deal lapsed, I would have on my hands a script without underlying rights, and virtually unmarketable. Worse yet, was it not likely that the Lunts might meanwhile be offered some other script much to their liking? Lunt-Fontanne successes tended to have three-year cycles, a season on Broadway, another on the road, another in England. At this time I was be-

coming very busy in broadcasting, raising a family, and paying off a mortgage. I told Fitelson: "I don't think I can afford to do this." He agreed. "It had to be your decision." He would inform Lynn Fontanne.



Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt (right) with William Hansen in *The Visit*, the acting couple's final major theatrical appearance.

It turned out that the Lunts did find a script that launched them on a new three-year cycle, a final major theatrical triumph. Ironically, it came to them from another Columbia faculty member. *The Visit*, adapted by Professor Maurice Valency from the work of Friedrich Duerrenmatt, became the next Lunt-Fontanne vehicle.

Near the end of the Broadway run my wife and I went to see *The Visit*. I had not seen the Lunts for some years. Afterwards we went to the stage door and I sent in my card, without any idea of what to expect. Almost at once, word came that we were to be admitted. As we went in, both Lunts came bursting from their dressing rooms and greeted us as if we were old friends. It seemed astonishing, as our relationship had always been so formal: the famous couple and the young instructor, Mr. Lunt, Miss Fontanne, Mr. Barnouw. But we chatted gaily, and reminisced. Then Lunt made an extraordinary statement. He said something along this line: "You know, that thing you did for us, *The Great Adventure*—we listen to that now and then, in Wisconsin. We have a recording of it. The theatre is a very strange business. You work in it for half a century, and you have nothing to show for it. Oh, we have clippings, and stills, and posters, things like that. But that recording, that gives us an idea of what we were like. I'm going to have an LP made of it."

Today great performances can be preserved via magnetic tape or numerous other processes, but the career of the Lunts belonged largely to an earlier era when performances indeed vanished into thin air. I don't know if Lunt had an LP made from his recording; I hope so. It was an off-the-air acetate recording, very perishable, on sixteen-inch discs, now obsolete. I had such a recording too, and deposited it for preservation in the National Archives.

# Our Growing Collections

KENNETH A. LOHF

*Backer gift.* The papers of John H. Backer (A.M., 1955), foreign service officer, author, and biographer of General Lucius D. Clay, have been presented by Mrs. Backer. The more than 17,000 pieces of correspondence, reports, audiotapes, and photographs in the collection relate to Mr. Backer's research and writing on General Clay and post-war German affairs; they also document his service in the Economic Division of General Clay's Military Government in Germany, as a member of the Foreign Service in Germany and the Soviet Union, and as the supervisor of U. S. Information Agency offices in several German cities. In the researching of his three books *Priming the Germany Economy: American Occupational Policies*, *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition*, and *Winds of History: The German Years of Lucius DuBignon Clay*, Mr. Backer interviewed public and military figures on audiotapes, and Mrs. Backer has included this extensive file in her gift. There are also important letters in the papers from General Clay, W. Averell Harriman, Charles E. Bohlen, Jacob K. Javits, John Kenneth Galbraith, and John J. McCloy.

*Borchardt gift.* Mr. and Mrs. George Borchardt have established a collection of the papers of their literary agency with recent gifts of more than 70,000 letters, manuscripts, and publishing documents. Mr. Borchardt began representing French publishing firms in New York during the early 1950s, and later he acted for individual French authors who were seeking American publication; he formed the literary agency with his wife Anne in 1968. The files which date from 1952 to the early 1980s, include extensive correspondence with authors, publishers, and other literary agents, including, Mme. Guillaume Apollinaire, Hervé Bazin,

Laurent de Brunhoff, Michel Butor, Albert Camus, Marguerite Duras, Jean Giraudoux, Henry Michaux, Henri Troyat, and Marguerite Yourcenar. Among English and American authors represented in the collection are John Ashberry, Eric Bentley,



BEARDED TITMICE are inhabitants of the Norfolk reed-beds. At one time they were fairly numerous, but with continual drainage and reclamation of marsh land and the greed of collectors, numbers were much reduced; however they are increasing. The male bird can be easily recognised by the black beard.

One of the handsomely calligraphed and hand-painted leaves from Margaret Adams's *Twelve English Birds*, 1970. (Cohen gift)



Paul Carroll, Caresse Crosby, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, John Gardner, Meyer Levin, Mary McCarthy, Anaïs Nin, Alan Sillitoe, and Ruth Rendell.

*Brown gift.* Ms. Kristen Cole Brown has donated a group of eleven letters written by her step-grandmother, Sue Jenkins Brown, to Peggy Baird, the friend of Hart Crane and the wife of the critic Malcolm Cowley. Dated 1956–1962, the letters relate to numerous personal matters and mention Crane, the John Unterecker biography of the poet, the poet's mother Grace Hart Crane, and public readings of Crane's poetry.

*Clifford gift.* Mrs. Virginia Clifford has added to the papers of her late husband, Professor James L. Clifford, the file of correspondence, notes, and reviews pertaining to the edition of Dr. Thomas Campbell's *Diary of a Visit to England in 1775*, which he edited and published in 1947 with an introduction by S. C. Roberts. A friend of Samuel Johnson and the Thrales, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell originally published his *Diary* in Sydney, Australia, in 1854, and Mrs. Clifford has included a copy of this rare edition in her gift.

*Cohen gift.* The Book Arts Collection has been considerably enriched by the gift from Mr. and Mrs. Herman Cohen of nineteen works notable for the distinction of their printers and publishers. Outstanding among them are: Henry Morris's *A Visit to Hayle Mill*, Bird & Bull Press, 1970, in a trial binding, inscribed by the author-printer; R. Hunter Middleton's *A Portfolio of Thomas Bewick Wood Engravings*, published by The Newberry Library in a limited edition in 1970 and comprising one hundred prints of birds and quadrupeds from the blocks at the Library; George Orwell's *Politics & the English Language*, printed in 1947 by Herbert W. Simpson for The Typophiles, with proofs, variant issues, and correspondence with the author and the printer; Herman Zapf's *Manuale Typographicum*, 1954, and *Typographischer*

*Variationem*, 1969, both limited and signed editions, published in Frankfurt am Main, and inscribed to Mr. Cohen; John Dreyfus's *Giovanni Mardersteig: An Account of His Work*, printed in Verona at the Officina Bodoni in 1966 for Gallery 303, one of 135 copies signed by the author; and *From a Letter of T. E. Lawrence*, designed and printed in 1959 by Giovanni Mardersteig at the Officina Bodoni for presentation to the members of the Double Crown Club, one of about 60 copies. Of special importance in Mr. and Mrs. Cohen's gift is the manuscript book, *Twelve English Birds*, lettered and illuminated by Margaret Adams after water-colour drawings by C. Harry Adams, Malvern, England, 1970; this exquisitely executed manuscript is on sixteen vellum leaves, lettered in black and red and illuminated in gold, and is bound by George Percival in full crushed levant morocco.

*Coover gift.* Mr. Christopher Coover (M.S., 1983) has donated eight first editions of literary works published in London and Geneva from 1737 to 1906, among which are three volumes of association interest: Mrs. John Lane's *Kitwyk*, London, 1903, inscribed by the publisher John Lane; Maarten Maarten's *My Lady Nobody*, London, 1895, inscribed by the author to Arthur T. Quiller-Couch; and Guy Thorne's *First It Was Ordained*, London, 1906, inscribed with a self-caricature and a long account of the circumstances relating to the writing of the novel.

*Dzierbicki gift.* In memory of Marguerite A. Cohn, Mr. Ronald L. Dzierbicki has presented a group of six rare editions and four drawings by twentieth century authors, including: Charles Bukowski's *At Terror Street and Agony Way*, 1968, and *The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hill*, 1969, both published by Black Sparrow Press, the former one of seventy-five copies with an original watercolor drawing by the author, and the latter a presentation copy inscribed to fellow-poet Jack Micheline; the Cummington Press edition of *The Book of Job*, 1944, with wood engravings by Gustav Wolf; Clayton Eshleman's *Brother Stones*,

Kyoto, 1968, with six woodcuts numbered and signed by William Paden; the Kanthos Press edition of Rico Lebrun's *Drawings for Dante's Inferno*, 1963, designed by Leonard Baskin, with four original lithographs laid in; George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, New York, 1946, the first American edition; and four abstract ink drawings by James Purdy, signed and dated 1963.



One of four original lithographs by Rico Lebrun for  
*Dante's Inferno*, 1963. (Dzierbicki gift)

*Granat gift.* Mr. Jerry Granat has presented an important series of forty-six letters written by the inventor of frequency modulation (FM), Edwin H. Armstrong (Sc.D., 1929), to Captain H. J. Round, a prolific inventor in the electronics industry who was associated with the Marconi Company. Ranging in date from 1936 to 1953, the letters, aggregating some seventy pages, discuss numerous subjects of mutual interest, including FM transmitters, various radio companies and models, the development of televi-

sion, radar, the Marconi Company, and other inventors. Mr. Granat's gift also includes several letters from Marion Armstrong and miscellaneous printed items and patents.

*Haerberle gift.* In memory of Professor Frances Henne, Ms. Florence Haerberle has presented an unusual and attractive reward of merit for addition to the collection established by Professor Henne. Dating from the early 1840s, the reward is illustrated with a stencil of a rose and an oak leaf, with additional details in pencil, inscribed at the bottom by one S. A. Sawyer.

*Henne gift.* Shortly before her death on December 21 of last year, Professor Frances Henne presented the final installment of her collection of children's books. Nearly 1,400 volumes comprise the gift and include works published from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s. Among the eighteenth century books are: Franklin Delano Roosevelt's copy of W. D. Cooper's *The History of North America*, London, E. Newbery, 1789; John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, Worcester, Isaiah Thomas, 1796; and Philip Doddridge's *Principles of Christian Religion*, Hartford, John Babcock, 1798, the earliest of many Babcock imprints in the collection, and a publisher in which Professor Henne was particularly interested. The chapbooks in the gift published by Mahlon Day include *The Affecting Story of Mary Davis*, 1830, and *Blind Susan; or, The Affectionate Family*, 1835. Other well-known nineteenth century publishers of children's books represented are Samuel Wood, Solomon King, American Tract Society, and McLoughlin Brothers. Twentieth century works include those by Maurice Sendak, Bruno Munari, and William Pène du Bois, among numerous others. There are more than one hundred pieces of realia, including a stereopticon and viewing cards, playing cards, bookmarks, greeting cards, woodcuts and engravings, toys and games, salesman's samples, and dioramas of a village festivity and a scene from an eighteenth century play. Of special importance are a lithograph by August Renoir, "La Tête baisé,"

ca. 1904, one of twelve lithographs published in 1919 in Paris by Ambroise Vollard in a limited edition portfolio; and an etching and dry point by Henry Moore, "Reading Lesson," 1967, one of fifty numbered copies signed in pencil by the artist.



Henry Moore, "The Reading Lesson," etching and dry point, 1967; one of fifty copies, signed and numbered by the artist. (Henne gift)

*Jones gift.* Mr. and Mrs. Dan Burne Jones have presented approximately sixty first editions, pamphlets, and printed ephemera pertaining to Rockwell Kent, Lynd Ward, James Michener, and other writers. Of special interest are two rare editions illustrated by Kent, the Lakeside Press edition of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick, or The Whale*, published in 1930 in three volumes and issued in an aluminum slipcase, and Voltaire's *Candide*, Random House, 1928, with thirty-nine initial letters and illustrations hand colored by the illustrator's artist friend, Dale Nichols. There are also fine copies of John Masefield's *The Trial of Jesus*, London, 1925, one of 530 copies signed by the author, and *Storyteller*



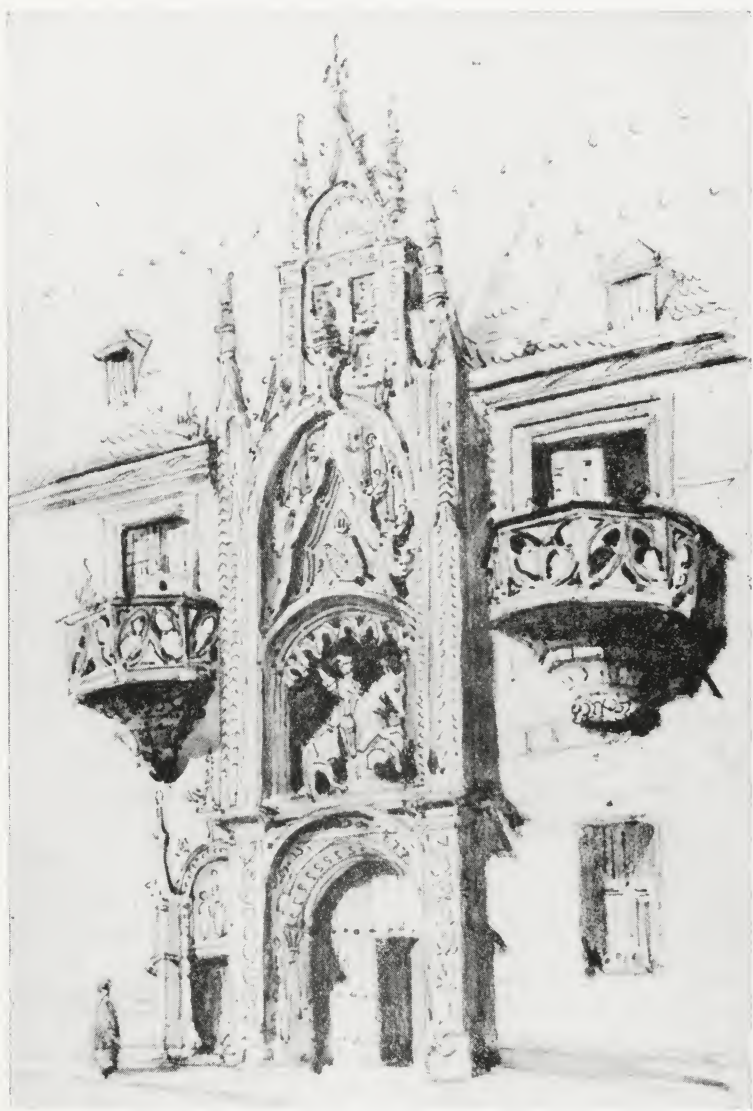
*Without Words: The Wood Engravings of Lynd Ward*, New York, 1974, inscribed by the artist.

*Lieberman gift.* Dr. E. James Lieberman has presented the first complete typescript of his biography of Otto Rank, *Acts of Will*, along with the printer's copy which contains his corrections and those of his editor.

*London gift.* Mrs. Ephraim London has presented a collection of seventy-one letters and other pieces of correspondence received by M. Lincoln and Ray Schuster from the connoisseur of Italian art Bernard Berenson, his companion Nicky Mariano, and others on the staff of I Tatti, Berenson's home in Settignano, near Florence. Dating from 1952 until shortly before Berenson's death, the file of thirty letters written by the art critic cover a variety of subjects, but deal primarily with the writing and publication of his books, his reading, travels, visitors to I Tatti, and the illustration of his books on Caravaggio and Lorenzo Lotto. There are also twenty-eight letters written by Nicky Mariano from 1953 to 1968, as well as other correspondence from Baroness Anrep and Lawrence Berenson, and a photograph of Berenson taken by Yehudi Menuhin in 1959, inscribed to the Schusters by Nicky Mariano, and with a note on the verso stating that this is the "last picture taken of B.B."

*Lutz gift.* Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Lutz have donated a copy of Zacharias Ursinus's *Summe of the Christian Religion*, printed in London in 1645. Based on the Latin edition of David Pareus, the work was translated into English by Henry Parry, Chaplain to Queen Elizabeth and the Bishop of Worcester.

*Palmer gift.* Mr. Paul R. Palmer (M.S., 1950, A.M., 1955) has presented a collection of 265 volumes, mainly first editions in the fields of contemporary literature and the popular arts, published from the 1930s to the 1970s. Included are several volumes inscribed by their authors, Laurette Taylor, Lana Turner, Edith Head, Helen Hayes, and others.



Pencil and wash drawing by Augustus Hare of La Grande-Porterie of the Ducal Palace, Nancy, France, ca. 1854. (Schimmel gift)

*Plimpton gift.* Mrs. Francis T. P. Plimpton has added to the collections of her late husband and father-in-law approximately 375 letters and documents, including the diaries kept by Francis Plimpton from 1892 to 1900, an extensive file of letters written by George Arthur Plimpton to his son during the 1890s, and individual important letters received by the Plimptons from Samuel Putnam Avery, John W. Burgess, Robert Underwood Johnson, Seth Low, Annie Nathan Meyer, George Haven Putnam, Charles Scribner, David Eugene Smith, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Horace White.

*Raushenbush gift.* Mr. Carl Raushenbush has presented a collection of 116 volumes and pamphlets of works by Henry Fielding and other eighteenth and nineteenth century authors, collected by his late wife, Esther McGill Raushenbush, who taught at Barnard College in the early 1930s. Of special interest are the first Dublin edition of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1795, a first edition of Frances Burney's *Camilla: or A Picture of Youth*, 1796, and a fine copy in contemporary calf of Henry Fielding's *Pasquin: A Dramtick Satire on the Times*, 1746.

*Schang gift.* Mr. Frederick C. Schang (B.Litt., 1915) had added ten additional visiting cards to the collection that he established nearly ten years ago, including choice examples of autographed cards of the choreographer Marius Petipa, the German philosopher Georg Hegel, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the German dramatist Gerhardt Hauptmann, the composer Irving Berlin, and the pioneer airman Alberto Santos-Dumont, among others.

*Schimmel gift.* Mr. Stuart B. Schimmel has presented exceptionally fine collections of autograph letters, manuscripts, drawings, and first editions of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Augustus J.C. Hare, and Christopher Isherwood. The Holmes collection, the most extensive of the three, comprises more than one hundred first editions of Holmes's publications and writings about him, as well

as fifty-seven letters written by the lawyer and jurist, including an important series to Charles Henry Butler, reporter of decisions at the U.S. Supreme Court; a group of thirty-eight working autograph drafts and corrected proofs of Holmes's reports of Supreme Court decisions; the autograph manuscript of an essay on the legal vocation, "Just the Boy That's Wanted in Law"; and a fine letter to P. E. Mason, dated March 1, 1899, giving advice to a young lawyer on what books to read, how to conduct himself, and the like. The printed materials include two first editions of Holmes's *The Common Law*, Boston, 1881, one a virtually pristine copy in the original plum cloth; Theophilus Parson's *Essays*, Boston, 1859, inscribed to Holmes; *Poems*, Boston, 1863, by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., inscribed to his cousin Sally Gardiner; and a copy in the original boards of *American Annals*, Cambridge, 1805, by Abiel Holmes, the grandfather of the jurist.

The late Victorian writer Augustus J.C. Hare is best known for his guidebooks, the materials for which he gained on foreign tours and many of which he illustrated himself. The collection presented by Mr. Schimmel includes: 105 volumes of these informative guidebooks and biographical works, as well as 59 autograph letters, primarily concerning the writing and publishing of his books; autograph manuscripts of the announcement for his book *Shropshire* and of his autobiographical essay "The Hare with Many Friends"; and five original pencil and wash drawings of buildings in France, Germany, and Switzerland, used as illustrations in his books. The thirty-eight volumes by Christopher Isherwood donated by Mr. Schimmel include first editions of the author's early books, *All the Conspirators*, *Goodbye to Berlin*, and *Prater Violet*, and of Gerald Hamilton's *Mr. Norris and I*, for which Isherwood wrote the prologue.

*Sykes gift.* Mrs. Claire Sykes has established a collection of papers of her late husband, the novelist and critic Gerald Sykes, who was adjunct professor at Columbia and taught sociology at the New School for Social Research during the 1960s and 1970s. Included

in Mrs. Sykes's initial gift were the manuscripts and proofs for numerous short stories, essays, novels, and non-fiction works, among them, *The Hidden Remnant*, *The Perennial Avantgarde*, and *Foresights*.

*Thomas gift.* In memory of Marguerite A. Cohn, Mr. Michael M. Thomas has presented a fine copy of the limited edition of Samuel Johnson's *London: A Poem* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, printed by the Chiswick Press and published in London in 1930 by Frederick Etchells and Hugh McDonald. The folio volume has an introductory essay by T.S. Eliot and is one of 150 copies signed by Eliot.

*Wertheim gift.* Professor Stanley Wertheim has added to the Stephen Crane Collection two rare and important printed items: *Legends*, a pamphlet privately printed in April 1942 by Edwin B. Hill in an edition of forty-five copies for the friends of Vincent Starrett and Ames W. Williams; and the first English edition of *The Little Regiment and Other Episodes of the American Civil War*, 1897, with the pictorial wrapper of The Pioneer Series bound in at the front of the volume.

*Woodring gift.* Professor and Mrs. Carl Woodring have presented a group of letters, drawings, and printed items pertaining to John Masefield and Charles Ricketts comprising: three letters written by Ricketts to Bruce Winston in 1924 concerning his costume designs for the 1924 production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, all of which have pen sketches, along with a separate sheet of pencil, pen and watercolor sketches of Gilles de Retz for the same play; five letters from Laurence Irving and Alan Jefferson addressed to Professor Woodring, with related printed ephemera, concerning the productions of John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ* at Canterbury Cathedral in 1928 and at Wittersham Church in 1953; and the copy of the limited signed edition of *The Coming of Christ*, published in London by William Heinemann in 1928, inscribed by Masefield to Ricketts.



## Activities of the Friends

*Winter Reception.* A reception sponsored by the Friends on Thursday afternoon, March 6, opened the exhibition, "Baron Corvo—Madman and Genius." Drawn from gifts received from Jack Harris Samuels and Stuart B. Schimmel, and from individual items acquired on the Charles W. Mixer and Friends Endowed Funds, the exhibition of nearly 150 items included such rarities as the only known inscribed copy of Frederick Rolfe's first book, *Tarcissus*, one of only a few known copies of the first issue of *Don Renato*, and the manuscript of the Venice letter book kept by Rolfe during his final years.

*Bancroft Awards Dinner.* Presided over by Gordon N. Ray, the annual Bancroft Awards dinner was held in the Rotunda of Low Memorial Library on Thursday evening, April 3. President Michael I. Sovern announced the winners of the 1986 awards for distinguished books in American history and diplomacy published in 1985: Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Oxford University Press; and Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, Basic Books, Inc. The President presented to the author of each book a \$4,000 award from funds provided by the Edgar A. and Frederic Bancroft Foundation.

*Future Meetings.* The reception opening the Michel Butor exhibition will be held on Thursday afternoon, December 4. The winter exhibition reception will be held on March 5, 1987, and the Bancroft Awards dinner is scheduled for April 2, 1987.

# THE FRIENDS OF THE COLUMBIA LIBRARIES

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